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STILLWATER, Minn. -- Two members of Minnesota's congressional delegation are at odds over a bill that would clear the way for a new bridge over the St. Croix River in Stillwater.

Rep. Michele Bachmann, a Republican whose district includes Stillwater, has introduced a measure that would negate the most recent environmental review by the National Parks Service and replace it with an earlier, more favorable version.

"My bill reaffirms the October 2005 decision by the National Park Service," Rep. Bachmann told KARE Wednesday.

"At that time they stated that a four-lane bridge would be consistent with the Wild and Scenic River Act."

Democrat Betty McCollum vowed to fight Bachmann's bill, calling the new plan out of scale with the scenic nature of the waterway and too expensive.

The bill would not provide any funding for the proposed \$700 million project, with costs shared by Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Federal Highway Administration. Bachmann plans no earmarks for the bridge, which has been the subject of political and legal battles for decades.

But her bill would remove one significant administrative hurdle, the October 2010 finding by the National Park Service that the four-lane version of the bridge would have adverse effects on the scenic nature of the St. Croix River.

The MnDOT plan roughly align the bridge with Minnesota Highway 36, a four-lane highway with at-grade intersections and stoplights in Stillwater. It would be six miles north of the current Interstate 94 bridge across the St. Croix in Hudson.

Last March a federal judge ruled that the 2005 Park Service ruling, which Bachmann's bill would reinstate, was an arbitrary and capricious departure from a 1996 review which came down against the bridge.

Bachmann said frequent closures of the aging lift bridge in Stillwater cause hardship for families who cross the Saint Croix daily for work and other activities. Rep. Ron Kind, a western Wisconsin Democrat, is among the co-sponsors of the measure.

"We could've easily had this bridge built in the early 1990's," Bachmann remarked, "But for the intervention of radical environmental groups who once again are trying to shut down planning."

Rep. McCollum told KARE she supports replacing the lift bridge, but she'll work against Bachmann's bill in Congress.

"The Park Service is one factor, but the price tag for this bridge is a huge factor in all this," McCollum remarked Wednesday.

"Stillwater deserves a bridge, but it needs to be a common sense plan that provides congestion relief while protecting the environment and the taxpayers."

McCollum also argued that the effects of the four-lane bridge on the Highway 36 corridor haven't been studied thoroughly.

"That could send huge volumes of new traffic down Highway 36 to Maplewood and North Saint Paul and Oakdale, places in the district I represent."

Stillwater Mayor Ken Harycki has asked the city staff to explore the possibility of suing the state, to have the lift bridge declared unfit for travel.

"It has a sufficiency rating of a 32 right now. The 35-W bridge, which is sitting at the bottom of the Mississippi River had a 50," Harycki told KARE.

"When you walk across it you'll see twisted girders and chunks of rust falling off. I was out there two or three weeks ago when it was very cold, and there was about an inch of cement dust sitting on top of the ice."

Governor Mark Dayton raised hopes for bridge supporters by asking Transportation Commissioner Sorel to review the situation with an open mind. The Minnesota Environmental Partnership and 25 other groups sent Dayton a letter asking him to consider a scaled down plan to replace the lift bridge.

In addition to the scenic aspects of a large bridge, outdoors groups have predicted the new bridge would spur an explosive and unsustainable amount of new residential development on the Wisconsin side of the river.